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Rights Watchdog Wants Chocolate-Maker to Stop Exploiting Children

Hershey's use of forced child labor will be the subject of a commercial titled "Hershey's Chocolate: Kissed by Child Labor." The first-ever Super Bowl "brand-jamming" ad will appear on a jumbotron screen immediately outside Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, where the game will be played on Sunday, February 5th, alongside spots by McDonalds, AllState, and others. The commercial is expected to reach over 250,000 consumers attending Super Bowl day activities.

The International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), an organization dedicated to ending the worst forms of child labor, sponsored the ad which features West African children typical of those forced to harvest cocoa for the giant chocolate maker alongside Hershey's iconic happy chocolate Kisses.

Despite almost ten years of hollow commitments from Hershey's to take responsibility for its cocoa supply chain and improve conditions for workers, significant problems persist. Just last week, CNN aired a documentary about child labor, trafficking, and forced labor practices that continue to plague the West African cocoa industry.

Unlike some of its competitors, Hershey's has made no movement to allow a third-party to investigate the exploitation of children by its cocoa suppliers. Additionally, Hershey's refuses to provide information about how the small amount of money it has invested in West Africa has actually reduced forced, trafficked, and child labor among its cocoa suppliers.

"In West Africa, where Hershey's sources much of its cocoa, over 200,000 children are forced to harvest cocoa beans every year," said Judy Gearhart, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum. "Hershey prides itself on its commitment to supporting underserved children in the United States, yet it lags behind when it comes to putting policies in place to end the exploitation of children in the cocoa industry."

"Hershey has made no public commitments to purchase cocoa that has been produced without the use of child labor, and the company has consistently refused to provide public information about its cocoa sources," said Gearhart.

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